

The Heart of Transformation: Army Culture

Transforming to the Objective Force is about changing the way The Army trains and develops leaders. It is about how we man and equip organizations and about how we fight and win.

We are at a crossroads between Industrial Age processes and Information Age systems with regards to technology and how decisions will be made. Accurate and timely information can be a vital ally to empower initiative. Conversely, that information can also be used to suppress initiative. Today, new information technology is at the very heart of Army Transformation. In every unit and at every echelon, better, faster, more comprehensive information acquisition and distribution mechanisms are seen as prerequisite to a more agile, lethal, and ultimately effective fighting force. Substantial funding is made annually in new sensors, computers, and communications systems and this is a correct investment to achieve our desired capabilities. However, it is equally important to fund educational efforts aimed at reshaping Army habits that ultimately will determine whether improved information systems become initiative's friend or enemy. If one thing is clear about information technologies, it is that their benefits are not self-generating. In the end, the hallmark of information superiority is a culture trained and inculcated to exploit that information.

The lines between centralized and decentralized planning and operations have blurred to such an extent that information could potentially be simultaneously available to every echelon through the use of a Common Relative Operational Picture (CROP). What we seek in our Army is an effective union of centralized direction with decentralized execution and a clear understanding by the leaders and staffs in each echelon that information technologies can easily support initiative stifling or initiative empowering environments. The difference between each situation is not in the technology, but instead in the institutional culture. The Army cannot afford to be a prisoner of its most recent past where that information is presented sequentially and out of context to operations. What we seek and are striving for are information and decision superiority systems that recognize opportunities to be seized and this can only be done by The Army's understanding and acknowledgement of our current Industrial Age culture, then divesting ourselves of those attitudes, as an essential first step to understanding how we must transform to an Information Age culture of innovation.

The Unit of Action will operate widely dispersed across a non-linear battlefield, possibly with a single FCS unit and their complement(s) of soldiers operating well away from other elements. Such situations will place at the disposal of junior officer and NCO leaders -- the FCS Platoon, Squad and vehicle commanders -- as much combat power, and, in some cases, as much responsibility for independent, creative and innovative action as some company commanders have wielded in the recent past. The Army will have to select, train, and develop these junior leaders to enable them to wield and orchestrate this power

effectively and properly. We don't want to be in the position of sub-optimizing the capabilities of our soldier-technology team simply because we have stayed with outmoded leader acquisition and development models and, thus, our leaders have not been adequately developed, particularly as newer, more capable technologies come on line.

The heart of Army transformation involves our understanding of the optimal way to achieve our goals and then possessing the resolve to overcome institutional inertia. The lynchpin of any cultural transformation must be the training and educational programs implemented at all levels throughout the Army. The thrust of the Army's cultural transformation to the Objective Force is twofold. We will increasingly demand leaders who are creative and innovative, yet prudent risk-takers who have been enabled to develop those traits by a culture that permits them to learn from their mistakes. The conditions for overcoming institutional defiance or recalcitrance towards cultural transformation will be the re-training and re-education for (those more senior) leaders whose careers placed them in a time and place where that future culture would be considered anathema in their past environment. Changing our mindset from the past and embracing those enabling technologies that facilitate information and decision superiority, ardently maintaining those customs and traditions inherent to the U.S. Army, and acting to change our culture to one that prizes innovation are our ultimate goals.